

Message Text

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SUBJ: ASEAN SENIOR OFFICIALS ' CONFERENCE IN BANGKOK

REF: A. STATE 6183; B. KUALA LUMPUR 272; C. SINGAPORE 234

SUMMARY: THE ASEAN SENIOR OFFICIAL CONFERENCE JANUARY 4-6 DISCUSSED THE PEACE, FREEDOM, AND NEUTRALITY PROPOSAL, AND ACCEPTED A FORMULATION WHICH A WORKING CONFERENCE IN FEBRUARY WILL DRAFT INTO A TREATY FOR THE FOREIGN MINISTERS' CONFERENCE IN MAY TO ADOPT. REGARDING THE ASEAN SECRETARIAT, THE THAI PROPOSED A WELL-STAFFED PERMANENT SECRETARIAT, BUT THE OTHER DELEGATES FAVORED A SKIMPIER ITINERATE SECRETARIAT WITH A ROTATING SECRETARY-GENERAL. END SUMMARY.

1. NEUTRALITY ZONE: A MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICIAL TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER JANUARY 15 THAT THE JANUARY 4-6 ASEAN SENIOR OFFICIALS CONFERENCE IN BANGKOK HAD DISCUSSED THE PROPOSAL FOR THE ZONE OF PEACE, FREEDOM, AND NEUTRALITY, THE FIFTH IN THE SERIES OF DISCUSSIONS ON THIS SUBJECT. THE THAI WILL HOST THE WORKING CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN FEBRUARY IN BANGKOK WHICH WILL DRAFT A TREATY BASED ON THE FORMULATION ACCEPTED AT THE SENIOR OFFICIALS' CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFERENCE.

2. PREVIOUS CONFERENCES DISCUSSED DEFINITIONS OF EACH COUNTRY'S CONCEPT OF THE ZONE, THE NECESSITY OF A GUARANTEE OF THE ZONE BY THE BIG POWERS, AND A STRICT STRUCTURE TO ADJUDICATE INTERNAL DISAGREEMENTS. TAKING THEIR LEAD FROM THE 7TH FOREIGN MINISTERS' CONFERENCE IN JAKARTA IN MAY 1973, THE DELEGATES TO THIS SENIOR OFFICIALS CONFERENCE AGREED NOT TO DISCUSS INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEES BECAUSE THEY HAD NO CONTROL OVER SUCH DECISIONS.

3. INSTEAD THEY DISCUSSED THE GUARANTEES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS TO SUCH A TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION, AS IT WILL BE KNOWN. THEY DISCUSSED THE OBLIGATIONS OF AND NECESSITY FOR A LOOSE STRUCTURE OF ADJUDICATING DISPUTES FOLLOWING THE PRINCIPLES OF UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTION 33. THEY AFFIRMED THE NECESSITY OF DEFINING WHAT CONSTITUTES AGGRESSION OR VIOLATION AGAINST ASEAN AND WHAT THE ASEAN COUNTRIES COULD DO TO DETER SUCH ACTS.

4. THE MFA OFFICIAL SAID THE THAI DELEGATION COINED ALL OF ITS PROPOSAL, WHICH WAS THE BASIS FOR THE DISCUSSION, IN CONCILIATORY OR INTERNATIONAL JURIDICAL TERMS ACCEPTABLE TO ALL. AS A RESULT, THE CONFERENCE PASSED THROUGH THE AGENDA RELATIVELY EASILY AND SUCCESSFULLY, LEAVING TO THE FEBRUARY WORKING OFFICIALS MEETING THE JOB OF DEFINING THE TERMS AND DRAFTING THE TREATY WHICH WILL BE PRESENTED TO THE NEXT SENIOR OFFICIALS CONFERENCE BEFORE THE FOREIGN MINISTERS CONFERENCE IN MAY. THE MFA OFFICIAL EXPECTS THE TREATY WILL BE READY AND THE FOREIGN MINISTERS CONFERENCE WILL APPROVE IT.

5. THE ASEAN SECRETARIAT: THE THAI HAD DRAFTED A PROPOSAL FOR A THREE-LEVEL SECRETARIAT: A SECRETARY GENERAL AND HIS STAFF WHO WOULD BE HEADQUARTERED IN JAKARTA WHERE MOST MEETINGS WOULD BE HELD; A SECOND LEVEL OF DELEGATIONS FROM EACH COUNTRY STAFFED BY AN AMBASSADORIAL-LEVEL OR SENIOR-LEVEL OFFICIAL, PLUS LESSER OFFICIALS WITH RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE VARIOUS COMMITTEES; AND A STAFF OF CAREER ASEAN OFFICIALS TO HANDLE THE ORGANIZATION OF MEETINGS, RESEARCH, HOUSEKEEPING AND SECRETARIAL CHORES. THE THAI HAD SENT THIS PROPOSAL TO EACH OF THE MEMBER COUNTRIES AND RECEIVED THEIR COMMENTS PRIOR TO THE CONFERENCE.

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6. AT THE CONFERENCE, HOWEVER, THE DELEGATES COULD NOT AGREE ON WHAT ROLE THE SECRETARY GENERAL SHOULD PLAY--WHETHER HE SHOULD HAVE SUBSTANTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES AS THE THAI ENVISAGED, OR BE SIMPLY A SECRETARY--AS WELL AS WHETHER A STAFF SHOULD BE IN CHARGE OF ORGANIZING MEETINGS. SOME SUGGESTED A CLERK MIGHT BE SUFFICIENT. CERTAIN COUNTRIES DID NOT WANT TO TRUST SUBSTANTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL WHO MIGHT NOT BE OF THEIR NATIONALITY. OTHER COUNTRIES DID NOT WANT TO

GIVE ADDITIONAL PRESTIGE AND AUTHORITY TO INDONESIA WHERE, ACCORDING TO THE THAI PLAN, THE PERMANENT STAFF AND SECRETARIAT WOULD BE. THE CONFERENCE ENDED APPROVING FOR A ONE-YEAR TRIAL PERIOD A ROTATIONAL SECRETARY GENERAL AND STAFF WHO WOULD TRAVEL TO EACH OF THE CAPITALS FOR THE VARIOUS CONFERENCES. OUR INTERLOCUTOR WAS BOTH DISTRESSED AT THE CHAOS THIS PLAN WOULD CAUSE AND SURE THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTERS CONFERENCE IN MAY WOULD APPROVE THE WHOLE CRAZY SCHEME.

7. COMMENT: WE RECOGNIZE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OUR INFORMATION AND THAT CONTAINED IN REFS B AND C ON BOTH THE NEUTRALITY ZONE AND THE SECRETARIAT. WE WILL ENDEAVOR TO EXPLORE THESE QUESTIONS FURTHER IN FUTURE CONVERSATIONS WITH MFA OFFICIALS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE TWO CONFERENCES.
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